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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BISHKEK 000280

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: A/DAS SPRATLEN'S CONSULTATIONS WITH KYRGYZ FM  
KARABAYEV

REF: A. BISHKEK 235

[1](#)B. 07 BISHKEK 1421

[1](#)C. 07 STATE 147334

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On March 18, A/DAS Pamela Spratlen met with Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev for the second U.S.-Kyrgyz Comprehensive Policy Dialogue. The three-hour meeting included a serious exchange on democracy and election issues, as well as discussion of other political issues, security cooperation, and economic and trade development. Spratlen expressed the continued interest of the U.S. in a broad-based bilateral relationship that emphasized all aspects of the relationship: political, economic and security issues. She conveyed U.S. concern about the trajectory of democratic reform in Kyrgyzstan following the "disappointing" December parliamentary elections. Karabayev, while acknowledging problems with the conduct of the elections, argued that the country was firmly oriented toward democratization in a Kyrgyz context. Karabayev pressed hard for a visit to Washington later this year for President Bakiyev, saying that a meeting of our presidents would serve as an impulse to deeper cooperation. Karabayev also presented a "concept paper" on Kyrgyz participation in the reconstruction in Afghanistan. The U.S. side briefed on assistance programs focused on improving the business and regulatory environment, and both sides agreed to explore ways to increase bilateral trade. Both sides expressed interest in continuing the Policy Dialogue. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Pamela Spratlen and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev led the second Comprehensive Policy Dialogue March 18 in Bishkek. (The first Comprehensive Policy Dialogue meeting took place in September 2007 in Washington. Ref C.) In over three hours of frank discussions, both sides reviewed democratic reform, security cooperation, and economic development, trade, and

investment -- and the role of U.S. assistance in these areas.

Spratlen and Karabayev continued their discussion on a range of political issues at a small dinner in the evening.

#### Democratic Development and Elections

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13. (C) A/DAS Spratlen conveyed Washington's strong concern about democratic development in Kyrgyzstan following the October constitutional referendum and the December parliamentary elections. Spratlen noted that the parliamentary elections had been disappointing in their conduct, as noted in the OSCE/ODIHR report, and in their result. The largest opposition party had been excluded from the parliament, creating skepticism that the new parliament reflected the will of the people. Given Kyrgyzstan's past successes, these elections left many worried about the trajectory of democratic development. Spratlen added that our shared goal of long-term stability would best be assured if the government had the confidence of the people and its institutions were strong. Spratlen urged that the Kyrgyz government lay out its priorities for improving governance, reducing corruption, and increasing public confidence.

14. (C) Karabayev vigorously defended the political process in Kyrgyzstan, saying that democratization was individual for each country. He said that compared to elections in nearby countries, the elections in Kyrgyzstan were carried out on a "high level" and in accordance with the law. Karabayev said that the constitutional referendum had been necessary to bring to a close over two years of divisive debate and political chaos. In Karabayev's view, the new constitution reflects democratic values and the rule of law. He pointed out that the constitution protects private property, protects linguistic minorities, abolishes the death penalty, and

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guarantees legal defense in court for all citizens, among other "concrete" protections.

15. (C) Karabayev acknowledged that the parliamentary elections were "not ideal," but the process had yielded some positive results: the regional threshold had been an impulse to the development of national political parties, weakening clan influence; 30% of the members of the new parliament were women. Most importantly, he said, the elections had brought political stability, which would allow a stronger government to continue with economic development and reforms.

16. (C) Spratlen noted Karabayev's "comprehensive explanation," but added that we continued to observe problems on the democracy front, with government pressure against opposition politicians, civil society groups, and the media. She cautioned that a draft law on non-governmental organizations should not limit their role. Karabayev countered that Kyrgyzstan had built civil society for "sixteen years" (since independence), and there was commitment in the government "up to the level of the president" not to "go back" on this. While the process for finding balance between civil society and government would continue, he said, the government had not shut down any NGOs.

#### Cooperation on Millennium Challenge

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17. (C) Karabayev thanked the U.S. side for the Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Country Program (TCP), the agreement for which was signed on March 14, and said that the government was prepared to take measures to improve the judiciary, the procuracy, and law enforcement, as outlined in the TCP. Spratlen pointed out that no one from Millennium Challenge had come to Bishkek for the signing because of concerns about democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Despite these reservations, Spratlen said, the decision had been taken to go forward. She said that implementation of the TCP represented a "great opportunity" for Kyrgyzstan to return to

a positive trajectory on reform and improve its indicators.

#### Pressing for a Visit

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¶8. (C) Karabayev mounted a strong and sustained push for either a working or official visit to Washington for President Bakiyev this year. In Karabayev's view, it was important that the heads of government be able to discuss issues related to what he termed a "strategic partnership," and he added that a visit would serve as an impetus to further cooperation. Karabayev said that Kyrgyzstan was willing to wait for a decision regarding a visit, but he feared that if the visit did not happen, cooperation would suffer. Spratlen said that Washington values its relationship with Kyrgyzstan on a full range of issues, but Kyrgyzstan's democratic credentials had been tarnished by the flawed elections and by troubling signs of restrictions on mass media and civil society, making it harder to win support in Washington for a visit. Spratlen said that to make the case now, Kyrgyzstan needed to demonstrate progress on democratic reform and commitment to shared values. (Note: Karabayev renewed his press for a visit during the dinner following the Dialogue. End Note.)

#### Security Cooperation

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¶9. (C) Spratlen thanked the FM for his country's support of Operation Enduring Freedom. She then turned to Security Assistance Office Chief Lt. Col. Crabb to provide a detailed briefing on current security assistance programs, including training and projects designed to bolster border security. The U.S. side also outlined the planned use of \$15 million of

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new CENTCOM counter-narcotics funding for training, facilities, and equipment. Karabayev lauded the close and strong cooperation with the military, and he expressed interest in greater training for law enforcement personnel. He added that there was a need for better training and education on the principles of border management. Spratlen responded that the U.S. side would look into the possibility of bringing an expert speaker to Kyrgyzstan to help with the conceptual strategy of integrated border management.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Yovanovitch noted that the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense was considering long-term plans for establishing two company-sized peace keeping units, as well as a small unit for possible deployment to Afghanistan in the shorter term. She said that the U.S. side was interested in an update on Kyrgyz plans, and would look for ways to support these efforts.

¶11. (C) Karabayev requested information regarding the status of American efforts to help the Kyrgyz acquire a radar for the airport. He noted the importance and the urgency of this request, particularly from a safety point of view. He added that he, personally, had intervened to forestall a strike of air traffic controllers, but it was important to find ways to help Kyrgyz Air Navigatsiya. Spratlen noted that Washington was aware of the Kyrgyz request and that it remained under review.

¶12. (C) The Kyrgyz side presented a "concept paper" on Kyrgyz participation in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. The paper included a proposal for an international conference in Kyrgyzstan on the question of establishing stability in Afghanistan, as well as a list of possible measures, including electricity exports. Spratlen said that we agreed with the regional approach, and the U.S. side would review the paper carefully.

¶13. (C) Spratlen raised a recent problem of Kyrgyz denial of flight clearance to a civilian charter aircraft carrying munitions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The

civilian plane was to have flown to Manas Airbase, where the cargo would have been transferred to U.S. military aircraft. Karabayev said that he was not aware of the recent case, noted the safety issues of maintaining a military air base at a civilian airport, and said he would look into the issue.

#### Economic Development

¶14. (C) The Kyrgyz had requested a discussion of U.S. assistance, especially its effectiveness. USAID Country Rep Shapiro provided a detailed briefing on USAID programs that are supporting improvements in the business environment, improving the framework for investments, and developing a trade strategy. She pointed out that Kyrgyzstan's Country Development Strategy was an important framework for both donor and government programs. Karabayev and his economic team said that trade turnover and investment from the U.S. should be higher, and they proposed jointly organizing a business forum for U.S. and Kyrgyz businesses. Spratlen said that there were a number of practical and policy steps that Kyrgyzstan should take to improve the business climate. She noted that the Embassy was organizing a follow-on to last year's "Doing Business with the U.S.A." conference for Kyrgyz businesses, and she encouraged working with the American Chamber of Commerce, which represents private business interests. Spratlen also encouraged high-level participation at this summer's Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) council meeting in Dushanbe.

#### Other Issues

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¶15. (C) The sides discussed a number of other specific issues during the meeting:

--Karabayev requested U.S. support for Kyrgyzstan's candidacy for the UN Security Council in 2012-2013. Karabayev said he did not expect a response, but wanted the U.S. to be aware of Kyrgyzstan's interest in serving.

--Responding to an earlier Kyrgyz non-paper, the U.S. side passed a non-paper listing of all treaties and agreements in force between the two countries. The Kyrgyz side said it would review the list, re-check its own records, and try to identify any gaps in the legal base of the relationship.

--The U.S. side also presented a non-paper response to the Minister's earlier paper outlining proposals for joint projects; the U.S. paper noted that several of the proposals were already being addressed by on-going USAID or security assistance programs.

--Both sides expressed interest in continuing the Policy Dialogue meetings, though no date was set for the next meeting.

#### Comment

¶16. (C) The Kyrgyz opted for a more operational discussion than the one Karabayev had sought in September 2007. He engaged fully and actively in a debate about democracy, but resisted any suggestion that Kyrgyzstan's democratic performance had suffered any serious setbacks from the December parliamentary election or other events. He welcomed the discussion of U.S. economic and security assistance and agreed to opportunities for follow-up discussions. His focus, however, was on winning U.S. support for a presidential visit to Washington at whatever level. We can expect this request to dominate any future bilateral discussions.

#### Participants

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¶17. (U) Participants included:

--Kyrgyzstan:

Ednan Karabayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs;  
Ermek Ibraimov, Deputy Foreign Minister  
Kanat Tursunkulov, Director, Western Countries Dept., MFA;  
Samaigul Borbiyeva, Director, Eastern Countries Dept., MFA;  
Aibek Moldogaziyev, Director, International Law Dept., MFA;  
Muratbek Baikhodjoyev, Director, International Organizations  
and Security Dept., MFA;  
Batyrgan Syrgabayev, Director, International Economic  
Cooperation Dept., MFA;  
Marina Grechennaya, Advisor to the Minister;  
Askhat Ryskulov, Counselor, Western Countries Dept; MFA.

First Deputy Minister of Defense Gen. Kubanychbek Oruzbayev  
attended the dinner.

--United States:

Pamela Spratlen, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, SCA;  
Marie Yovanovitch, Ambassador;  
Lee Litzenberger, Deputy Chief of Mission;  
Robert Burgess, Pol-Econ Chief, Embassy Bishkek;  
Patricia Shapiro, USAID Country Representative;  
Lt. Col. Patrick Crabb, Security Assistance Office Chief;  
Alanna Shaikh, Central Asia Country Assistance Coordinator,  
EUR/ACE.

¶18. (U) A/DAS Spratlen has cleared this cable.

YOVANOVITCH